

Two Poems by Harekrishna Deka

If you say

If you say, don't have a skimpy meal
I'll fill your plate with delicacies
But you mustn't utter a word—
The aroma of your savoury dishes would perhaps
Make me accept your solicitation.
But if you say,
After you fill your tummy with goodies
I'll stitch your lips,
So that you become unable to put up a clamour,
What'd I do then?
Before you start stitching
I'd give out such an ear-splitting shriek
That you'd turn stone-deaf.
My voice is more precious than the scrumptious food you may offer.

Precious—
For me as well as
For everyone.
The dumb too speak
Not with words,
But with gesticulations
Heard by one and all.

Detention

For many days there was no sight of Poetry.
I thought it had bolted for good.
However one day Poetry made its appearance.
Its body bore the marks of whip-lashes.
I asked, what's wrong?
It answered gasping,
I tried to be a paragon of poetry
But they dragged me into custody.
I asked, where were you so long?
It looked around fearfully,
Uttered nothing.
I asked again, where were you Poetry?
Poetry answered shivering,
In the interrogation room
In the detention camp.

I tried to safeguard it.
But Poetry said, how can you give me protection?
Can you, can you really?
Go there and have one look.
There humanity has been sentenced to death.

Translated by **Krishna Dulal Barua**

Harekrishna Deka is a renowned Assamese poet, short story writer and critic.

Krishna Dulal Barua is a prominent translator and writer based in Nagaon, Assam. He received the Katha Award for translation in 2005.